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The development of expertise in a project group for educational innovation

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The induction of beginning teacher has become one of the major themes in education. The government of the Netherlands invested in regional project groups that are responsible for the development of induction programs in schools. These project groups consist of teacher educators and school teachers. To succeed in their goals the members of the project groups had to develop new expertise (Ahern, Leavy, & Byrne, 2014) and to collaborate as professional learning groups (PLG) (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006). Studies into the development of expertise and the collaboration within education project groups are scarce .

In this study we investigated the factors that contribute to the development of expertise of the group members and the formation of a PLG The group consisted of ten members and two project leaders. Data collection took place through observation of project meetings, semi-structured interviews with project members and analysis of publications and documents of the project group.

Important factors that contribute to expertise development of the project members are the availability of time, the quality of the project management, the organization of formal learning arrangements like study days and the diversity in the composition of the projectgroup.

Based on the analysis of the data we can conclude the participants developed expertise in three areas: the content of the project (the skills and learning ofof beginning teachers), the contextual aspects(the conditions in the schools where new teachers work and the regional infrastructure) and skills about supporting beginning teachers and training programs for coaches of beginning teachers. Expertise was acquired in various ways, but mostly by doing, stimulated by the project management, reading, focused group activities and cooperation. Gradually, the project group developed characteristics of a PLG, such as a common vision. A characteristic of a PLG which was less developed was the researchly disposition of the project members.

Ahern, T., Leavy, B. & Byrne, P.J. (2014). Knowledge formation and learning in the management of projects: A problem solving perspective. *International Journal of Project Management* 32(8), 1423-1431.

Stoll, L., Bolam, R., McMahon, A., Wallace, M. & Thomas, S. (2006). Professional Learning Communities: A Review of the Literature. *Journal of Educational Change* 7(4), 221-258.